

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1646

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to making adjustments pertaining to the high school Washington assessment of student learning in mathematics and science.

Brief Description: Making adjustments pertaining to the high school Washington assessment of student learning in mathematics and science.

Sponsors: Representatives Sullivan, Priest, Kenney, Morrell and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/4/09, 2/20/09 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the State Board of Education to implement the requirement for students to meet the state standard on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in mathematics and science after the currently required class of 2013, based on a determination that additional time is needed and primarily due to examination of the reliability and validity of the mathematics and science assessments for purposes of graduation.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop an implementation plan to assure students have the opportunity to learn the new mathematics and science standards, and to recommend by December 1, 2009, whether the high school science WASL should be an end-of-course assessment.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Probst, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cox, Dammeier, Hunt, Johnson, Liias, Maxwell, Orwall, Santos and Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383)

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

In 2007 a temporary policy was adopted that allows students who meet other high school graduation requirements, including meeting the state standard on the reading and writing portions of the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), to graduate without having met the standard on the mathematics portion of the WASL. The policy began with the graduating class of 2008 and extends through the graduating class of 2012. The result is that beginning with the class of 2013, students will have to meet the standard on the high school WASL or an approved alternative assessment in four subject areas for graduation: reading, writing, mathematics, and science. The State Board of Education (SBE) was authorized to set an earlier date for the mathematics and science requirements but chose not to do so.

Also in 2007, the SBE and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) were directed to undertake a comprehensive review and revision of the state learning standards in mathematics and science. For mathematics, the 2008 Legislature determined that additional work was necessary and directed the SBE and the OSPI to continue the revisions. The final mathematics standards for high school were approved for adoption in July 2008. The OSPI has submitted the science standards for review by the 2009 Legislature. Revisions to the learning standards drive changes to the WASL to align the assessment with the new standards.

The 2008 Legislature also directed that the high school mathematics WASL be redesigned as a series of end-of-course assessments (EOCs) in particular subject areas rather than a comprehensive assessment. Timelines for implementing the EOCs and for using them in place of the current mathematics WASL for purposes of graduation are outlined in statute. Due to the delay in adopting the final mathematics standards, some of the timelines can no longer be met. Redesign of the high school science WASL as a series of EOCs has been proposed, but was vetoed in 2007 by the Governor and not reconsidered in 2008.

"Reliability and validity" are psychometric terms used to gauge the technical quality of an assessment. Generally speaking, reliability refers to the extent that the assessment yields consistent results and does not randomly vary in its outcomes. Validity refers to the degree that the assessment measures what it is intended to measure. Included in considerations of reliability and validity is the question of whether the assessment is appropriate for its intended use or purpose.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The SBE is authorized to extend past the graduating class of 2012 the temporary policy that allows students to graduate even if they have not met the state standard in mathematics on the high school WASL, if the SBE determines additional time is needed before the requirement is imposed. The determination must be made primarily on an examination of the reliability and validity of the mathematics EOCs as a high stakes test for graduation purposes, but may include other considerations. Similarly, the SBE is also authorized to implement the requirement that students meet the state standard in science on the high school WASL with a

class after the graduating class of 2013 based primarily on an examination of the science assessment. Provisions allowing the SBE to set an earlier date for requiring students to meet the standard on the mathematics and science WASL are removed.

The specific timelines for implementing mathematics EOCs as a graduation requirement are removed. Instead, the EOCs must be implemented statewide in 2011, with Algebra I plus Geometry or Integrated I plus II used to assess students in the mathematics content of the high school WASL.

The OSPI, in consultation with the SBE and the Professional Educator Standards Board, must identify strategies and develop an implementation plan to assure that all students have the opportunity to learn new mathematics and science standards. The OSPI must also recommend whether to use an end-of-course assessment for high school science and identify potential costs. A report is due to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2009.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill extended the temporary policy allowing students to graduate without meeting the standard on the mathematics WASL through the graduating class of 2013, rather than through the class of 2012. The substitute bill retains the current law that applies the policy through the class of 2012 and allows the SBE to extend the policy through a later graduating class if it is determined that additional time is needed. The original bill did not address the science graduation requirement and required a study by the SBE of the feasibility of the current timeline for students to meet the standard in science and an examination of curriculum and instruction in science. The substitute bill retains the current requirement for students in the graduating class of 2013 to meet the standard on the science WASL, but authorizes the SBE to implement the requirement with a class after the graduating class of 2013 based primarily on an examination of the reliability and validity of the science assessment. The substitute bill requires the OSPI, in consultation with the SBE and the Professional Educator Standards Board, to develop an implementation plan to assure that all students have the opportunity to learn new mathematics and science standards and recommend whether to use an end-of-course assessment for high school science.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 26, 2009.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Last session, the Legislature created a timeline for modifying the current math WASL. At the same time, it was determined that additional work was needed on the mathematics standards. The result was very good standards, but now there is concern about keeping the 2013 date for students to meet those standards on a new high school math

assessment. This bill provides an additional year for the system to adapt, but also allows the SBE to make additional adjustments if it is determined that the assessments are not valid and reliable, or if the end-of-course assessment is simply not ready. In science, there is a lot of work yet to do. Mathematics has been the focus in the last several years; now science needs a greater focus. The 2013 graduation date is not changed, but the SBE should lay out a system of curriculum, teaching, and assessment in science. It is preferred that the SBE determine the date by when students will need to pass the math and science WASL rather than having it fixed in law. Issues of reliability and validity need to be addressed before passing the assessment is a graduation requirement.

Any attempt to assure that the system is really ready for this graduation requirement is widely applauded, especially when we know the system is not ready. Any delay is a positive thing. We hear constantly from parents whose children are in limbo, not knowing what test to take or what is going to be required for graduation. It is appropriate to keep the dates in statute and give the SBE authority to push them out if necessary. It is appreciated that the Legislature appears to be listening to concerns expressed by school districts who are trying to implement multiple changes.

(Opposed) The current testing requirement and the current date of ending the temporary exception for the math WASL with the class of 2012 must be maintained. If this date is pushed back another year, it will be 20 years since the beginning of education reform. Hold the current date; work on the end-of-course assessments to get them up and running. It is necessary to keep a laser-like focus on math and science. The required date of 2013 for students to meet the standard in math and science should be maintained. It is appropriate to ask the SBE to examine the assessment and the overall readiness of the system, but it will need resources to do this work. Much of the proposed examination of science has been done already. There should be further discussion about what additional information is needed.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Sullivan, prime sponsor; Alan Burke, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition; Juanita Doyon, Parent Empowerment Network; Lisa Macfarlane, League of Education Voters; and Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators.

(Opposed) Brian Jeffries, Washington Roundtable; and Edie Harding, State Board of Education.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.